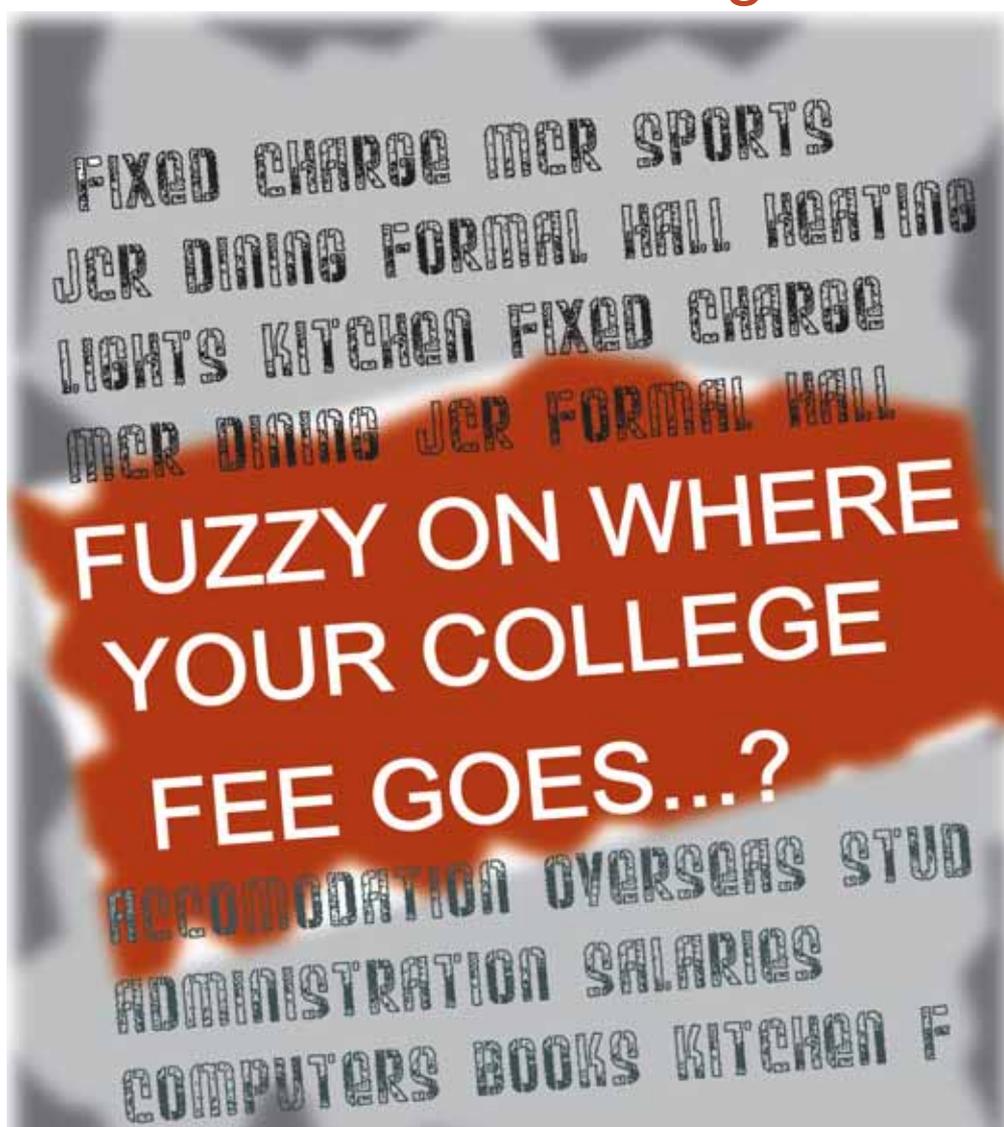


COLLEGE FEES: Gown Investigates



Also:

The future of design

Graduate Societies in Cambridge

Graduate welfare: Counselling



BY APPOINTMENT TO
H.M. QUEEN ELIZABETH II
ROBE MAKERS



BY APPOINTMENT TO
H.R.H. THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH
ROBE MAKERS



BY APPOINTMENT TO
H.M. QUEEN ELIZABETH
THE QUEEN MOTHER
ROBE MAKERS



BY APPOINTMENT TO
H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES
ROBE MAKERS

Ede and Ravenscroft

FINE GENTLEMEN'S TAILORING

May Ball Offer

£100* off any evening suit
From £190 (with discount)

20%* off any evening shirt
or accessories

*With student union card

Ede and Ravenscroft 71-72 Trumpington Street Cambridge
Telephone 01223 350048 Monday to Saturday 9am - 5pm

In this issue

How are Graduate College Fees Spent? GOWN speaks to Bursars, the Graduate Union & MCR Presidents..... p 12

ALSO.....

Letter from the Editor 4

Academic Review 5

Letter from India
The Future of Design
Environmental issues

Welfare 22

University Counselling Service
Student Family Society
NMA Scheme

Arts and Culture 25

Graduate Orchestra
Graduate Dining Society
Hip-hopping in Cambridge

GOWN speaks to GU President Ruth Keeling about her term in office..... 18



A personal journey for one Cambridge student p.30

GOWN



Cambridge grad helping to solve Third World water shortages p.8

Editor-in-Chief:
Arnaud Bonnet

Cover Story:
Ria Kioupritz, Britt Peterson,
Arnaud Bonnet, Alex Painter

Welfare:
Jane Ding

Design and Layout:
Megan Meredith-Lobay

Business Manager: Joyce Otobo

Treasurer: Francisco Hernandez-
Martinez

Webmaster: Dan Lockton



Election time

On 18 May, the Graduate Union will hold its Presidential elections. At the time of going to press, just over three weeks before the elections, the Graduate Union had still not publicised its elections, highlighting the continuous communication problems at the GU.

GOWN interviewed Ruth Keeling, current President, who was elected in November 2004. Ms Keeling's manifesto at the time of the elections focused on 4 aims: strengthen the GU, get all grads involved, improve services and facilities, and "support high-quality research". Did Ruth Keeling achieve her targets? From the day she was elected, Ruth Keeling impressively re-organised the GU offices, went through paperwork which had piled up for years, set up several working parties to address the strategic questions facing the GU, and built up strong relationships both with the University and MCR Presidents. She re-opened the GU shop, made the GU office a more welcoming place for visitors by providing daily newspapers and coffee, and worked on getting several computers for free access. The GU was indeed strengthened, and the services and facilities provided by the Graduate Union were improved. Ms Keeling achieved 2 of her goals.

It can be argued that the aim to get more graduates involved in the organisation was not very successful; a problem which previous presidents have also faced. The Keeling team set up an electronic database of University-wide events and collaborated extensively with the Family Society for Christmas and Easter parties (see article by Fatima Wang). But what about the bulk of the graduate student body? Ruth Keeling sent regular e-mails to MCR Presidents to inform them of the work of the GU. Most MCR Presidents only forwarded the first few e-mails to their MCRs and subsequently gave up. It will therefore be important for the new President to come up with new ways of reaching out to graduate students more effectively. A potential solution may be to resume the discussions with the University to open a bar at the Graduate Union.

Among her numerous achievements, Ms Keeling successfully opposed the introduction of differential College fees. Much has been said and written about College fees, and GOWN investigates how Colleges use the money. We also report on the activities of 2 graduate societies, and provide an extensive welfare section highlighting the services offered by the Counselling Service; we also suggest ways in which grads can help disabled students of the University through the Non-Medical Associates Scheme.

Arnaud Bonnet
editor@gownmagazine.com



In some ways, Delhi can be compared to Kali, the Hindu goddess of destruction, who, in some depictions, has quite a few heads, arms, and legs. Kali does not just symbolise violent physical destruction, but rather, her mythology also encompasses the noble cause of destroying ignorance. For me, this analogy to Kali strikes a chord as the city is vast, sprawling, overpowering, omnipresent, and in many ways, scary; and like the deity, it has little tolerance of ignorance. Given this, I have had a steep learning curve to overcome during my fieldwork. Despite my increased level of familiarity of Delhi (which includes hotly arguing with dodgy taxi-wallahs), I still feel, in many ways, overpowered by the city.

a letter from

INDIA

story and photos by Dhiraj Murthy



It's a city that is hard to become familiar and comfortable with - a real antithesis to Cambridge. It is massive, congested, and generally takes a long time to get around. Its vast middle-classes live in relative comfort with TVs, cars, good jobs, decent schools, access to health care, and plenty of food. Tramps knock on the windows of a Mercedes stopped at a busy intersection.

Visiting businesspeople and wealthy Delhiites munch on camembert and swill vintage Bordeaux in a cocktail lounge. Devotees silently pray at India's largest mosque, the *Jama Masjid*. Really, Delhi's neighbourhoods and inhabitants are many and highly diverse - five minutes away from my flat is a dense rubbish-sorting slum, which borders a posh and spacious shopping complex. A recent interview for my fieldwork brought such sharp contrasts home to me: I went to a smart South Delhi neighbourhood, New Friends Colony, to do two interviews with a filmmaker and a staff writer for *Elle India*; during the course of the day I found myself at a makeshift tea stall on the road - a well worn kettle balanced on a blank of wood - surrounded by kids in rags, begging or offering to shine shoes. Next to the stall was a newly built *Lacoste* boutique. These juxtapositions jolted me.

New Friends Colony had its fair share of Mercs - a veritable Sloane Square - and these kids were desperate to find a punter willing to give them the equivalent of 2 or 3p for a shoe shine.

Prima facie, it seems as though she and these kids live in opposite, mutually exclusive worlds. However, the reality seems to me to be far more complex - their lives are, in various ways, intermeshed. Delhi's middle- and upper- classes are often served *chai* by Delhi's poor. The houses of the former are cleaned and maintained by the latter. The rubbish of the former is sorted and recycled by the latter. Obviously, these interactions are bounded by stratified relations of power.

Doing fieldwork in such a context makes one reflect. Not only do I feel guilty that I zip around Delhi from interview to interview in an air-conditioned taxi, whilst these kids are left in the sweltering heat; but I also end up having a lot of difficulty contextualising the data from respondents such as the *Elle* writer. However, I have had to attempt to see all these elements holistically, which is easier said than done. Otherwise, my interviews tend to become dislocated and lose their richness.

But, such deep inequalities seem

capable of driving one mad! I found myself many a time overcome by this. However, I am just living in Delhi temporarily. Those I have interviewed live with these deep socio-economic differences on a quotidian basis. Some, of course, think nothing of it. Others donate to charities, are involved in activism, and selectively filter it out. In all reality, most implement a combination thereof. Ultimately, I found that the key to managing my fieldwork in Delhi has been to just throw myself at the mercy of the city,

but with a calm optimism. In many strands of Hindu mythology, it is in this way that Kali is also subdued - Shiva throws himself under her feet and Kali casts off her ferocious incarnation for the calmness of Parvati. This tactic has definitely made Delhi more pacific for me; but, as an oncologist shuts out the disturbing reality of some of her patients' inevitable deaths, I too have opted for selective anaesthesia in order to complete my fieldwork. But, painkillers do wear off and liberal guilt returns. A donation here and there can keep it at bay, but doing fieldwork amongst such poverty has definitely been more difficult than my fieldwork in London will ever be.

Graduate Prize-winner to pump water to the Third World

Thomas Smith, PhD student in Engineering, and the 2004 winner of The L'Oréal / Royal Institution Science Graduate of the Year Award writes about his project to build a cheap pump that can be used in the world's poorest nations.

For more than 100 years, physicists and engineers have been inspired by thermofluidic oscillators; machines that convert heat into useful work without moving parts. Despite the intrinsic fascination of an engine made up entirely of liquids and gases, these machines depend heavily on the inertia of the fluids they use in order to achieve a useful output. Low power and inefficiency have plagued their history and as such they have been confined to laboratories - until very recently.

As an undergraduate in the Physics department at Imperial College, I approached my thermodynamics lecturer with an idea: by relying on finite relaxation times and density changes in heated fluids, a machine powered by a low temperature heat source, consisting only of gas filled tubes and one-way valves could conceivably be applied as a thermally driven pump. It was clear that if such a machine, now known as a Non-Inertive Feedback (NIF) thermofluidic oscillator, could be reduced to practice, it would be cheap to manufacture and, being independent from the inertia of the working fluid, would find countless industrial, agricultural and domestic applications from power station scales down to the scale of microelectronic components.

The greatest single motivation however was the real impact that such a machine could have on the lives of the world's poorest people in water pumping, heating and cooling and power generation applications.

The department gave me some laboratory space and a small budget to investigate this idea further for my final year project. I aimed to determine

whether a specific configuration of the invention was dynamically stable under certain conditions and if so, by what underlying physical principles its performance was governed. Through stochastic modelling and experimental verification, I was able to demonstrate a self-actuated, sustained oscillation giving rise to the flow I had predicted.

During the 16 months between graduating from Imperial and arriving in Cambridge, I submitted a research funding proposal to the Public Interest Energy Research program of the California Energy Commission to investigate the feasibility of applying such a system to feed-pumping in a domestic scale solar power plant. On the strength of my undergraduate project, I was granted U.S. \$75,000 and the University of Cambridge Engineering Department agreed to host my project as a PhD.

One consequence of attempting to describe such inherently non-equilibrium systems is the need to develop a new set of tools in which the classical heat engine thermodynamics developed by pioneers such as Watt, Rankine, Carnot and Helmholtz, is adapted to incorporate the stability constraints and non-equilibrium effects intrinsic to these machines.

Three years of prototyping and modelling have culminated in a

NIF oscillator which pumps water into the roof of the Hopkinson laboratory with an efficiency of 25% of the Carnot efficiency (the theoretical maximum) using heat at a temperature which could easily be provided by a low cost solar hot water collector. A high pressure rig has also been built and will shortly undergo preliminary tests to determine whether pressures useful in small scale power generation, refrigeration and air conditioning can also be achieved as predicted.

NIF thermofluidic oscillators are now sufficiently advanced to start developing them for specific applications. A research and development company, Critical Point Dynamics (CPD) is being created to develop NIF oscillators for the market through industrial collaborations. CPD will invest proceeds from selling licenses into developing subsidised solar irrigation pumps for the developing world and funding continued research aimed at bringing this emerging field to maturity.

Thermofluidics is typical of an ancient field which has been revived with modern insight. It has the potential to change fundamentally the way we think about engines, and to open up numerous possibilities that were previously thought impossible or too expensive.



PHOTOGRAPH courtesy of Thomas Smith

WISE WISE

Musings on Old Habits... and New Climate Change

by one Homo sapiens sapiens: Dave Hampton, past Emma graduate (Matic 1977)

The author is a self-confessed 'Low Carbon bon Economy' fanatic. His career, since studying Engineering (and rowing!) at Cambridge, has been anchored in 'greening' the built environment. He is Director of ABS consulting. He believes there are great career opportunities ahead – in designing the radically different sustainable built infrastructure solutions that are badly needed. If Global Warming is half as serious as most now think, there will be jobs galore in mitigation and adaptation. Architects - of our species survival. Engineers - of a carbon free global economy?

MEN

My week was spent coaching the optimisation of efficiency of conversion of naturally generated (renewable, random and highly excitable!) 8-human, 'horse-power' into harnessed and focussed forward boat speed. Hold that thought. Success in bumps = happiness. Route to success = clever use of finite energy resource.

You, reader, are clever. That is a given. You know what you know, and you are aware of some of what you don't. You'll have prejudices and opinions, and you'll be subjected to vast amounts of propaganda and 'wisdom' shaping your mind and colouring your judgement. Talking of colour, K-Day in February was International "Go Purple" day. Many folk sported a flash of purple - in support of governments tackling climate change. Did you?

Imagine if the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere were coloured purple (and not invisible.) If CO₂ were a coloured gas - we would have witnessed the sky changing colour in our lifetimes – there is 20% more CO₂ in the air now than there was just 45 years ago, when I was born. Purple is the colour we'd go if we couldn't breathe. It can be the colour of sunsets, sunrises, awakenings... If we angrily looked at blue sky – we'd see red! That's purple!

Falling just two days after Valentine's, the colour purple is at least popular and passionate, and so K-Day gives a heaven sent opportunity for striking up in conversation with total strangers, (chatting them up if you like!), as in "Are you wearing that lovely purple chiffon scarf/pashmina, for Kyoto?"...Let's not descend further into conjecture about undergarments!

Again, I stray. Suffice to say that if you read 'Grown Up!' Newspapers, you will be aware that many Editors still have lingering doubts about The Climate Change Story, and regularly commission highly articulate and persuasive commentators - of unsurpassed economic, political and social wit and status - to write pieces for them. Pieces that rekindle the embers of doubt, and so reinforce the reader's (and the world's) state of denial. Denial, that's what it is!

Fortunately our hearts, souls, instincts and innate grasp of nature tend to keep us connected to the less well reported ecological truth. That our Planet is in Bad Shape. And that the Economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Ecology!

Also fortunately, the IPCC, the International Panel on Climate Change, and other independent bodies (e.g. British Antarctic Survey) provide us with a single "commanding consensus" message that fossil fuel abuse is a huge real and present danger to us all – now. It's that big! Bear in mind too that some worthy journals depend heavily on advertising revenue from, for example, luxury car ads. So the truth is not always as plain to see as we might hope.

New Scientist ran a Global Warming special edition, debunking and exposing all of the many and various highly organised, and highly funded, climate change denialist lobbies. The funding of these lobbies is usually 'big oil'. They are many, and their influence is pervasive and

It was the week Kyoto got signed. (K-day - 16th Feb.) I was enjoying coaching – and taking a week's holiday. Time to think. Dangerous. Holiday: yes, before you sense it, I know, I'm a lucky man! And lest you also sense undue emphasis on the masculine, let me say I'd rather coach the Emma 1st Women, but the 'queue' is longer. As for "wise man", the name humankind gave itself a long time ago, I distance myself from that decision. It does make me laugh though, how, (like New York) our once male-dominated species considered itself "So good it named it twice."

If I'd got home from a hard day at work in the Biology lab in the C16th, and proudly announced to my wife that I'd coined a new scientific term for our species - 'wise wise man' - I'd have got a 'telling' look. I'd have reconsidered. On both counts! (Are we so wise?) What's my point? It is a 'power'-point, if you haven't already guessed. I want to express a personal view about the power, mobility, heat and light that we, intelligent beings (well, at least we fortunate ones) take for granted. I want to tip-toe, in trepidation, into the moral maze of whether or not we should give a 'monkeys'. (Sorry, Darwin.)

insidious. Almost as bad as people like me, they would have you believe! Honest folk can get labelled environmentalist 'scaremongers' - when they speak out.

So, what is to be done. Life goes on, albeit in a bit of a truth vacuum. Our combined daily UK energy and fuel use habits causing nearly half a million tonnes of precious carbon-based fossil fuel reserves to be burnt – every day! Combusted - irreversibly - into a boggling 1.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide waste, overloading natures ability to cope as never before and causing reckless irreversible ecosystem damage.

A curious twist in this tail is that the raised CO₂ levels in the air we breathe today, stem from our cumulative recent historical excesses. If we could stop tomorrow (and we can't) we still have a problem. (Houston?) The UK, which led the world into the Industrial Revolution, is historically accountable for about 15% of all the extra CO₂ that's already up there!

That brings me onto this moral maze thing. Whilst it's true "what can one person do?" it is also true that most forms of institutionalised stupidity can only ever be challenged and reversed by small numbers of people going it alone - and "being the change they wish to see in the world" – (Ghandi.) As individuals, communities, countries even! The way to communicate our beliefs to US and China is to act them out - in our lifestyles. To lead from the front. Not such a heroic act, really. Is the UK not morally obliged to lead the world out of the mess that we led it into, during the 1st Industrial Revolution?

Hey. Doesn't this sound like a big idea to you? Doesn't it sound fun, and a huge opportunity? It is. It even has a name. In flash of inspiration, Tony Blair called it "The Low Carbon Economy" (but then he mostly forgets about it!)

One of the brightest (Oxford I'm afraid) economists predicts that "Carbon will be the currency of the C21st". That is how big this is. Assuming we chose to do something. And that we don't sink into the mire. Or drown in a depressed sea of purple carbon dioxide and despair.

So what does this mean, to you and

me, here and now, today, as we live in college rooms? Emmanuel is at last investing in a further bulk purchase of the latest energy-efficient light bulbs, that reduce - by an awesome factor of 5 - the volumes of CO₂ that power stations need to spew - to keep us happy and bright! How many intellectuals does it take to change a light bulb?

We can also exercise some self-control, in tweaking the settings of radiators, etc. (In my college room as I write this, I can moderate my use of the electric fire provided!) On cold days we can be wise enough to seek to turn the heat down without resort to opening windows. Not rocket science. (Sapiens sapiens!)

As I edge closer and closer to the 'sanctimonious self-righteous self', let me explain that I have lived for a week in a shared college 'house' where 'collective responsibility' created snags. Last to bed turns the lights off. Simple! But who is last? Whoever he or she was, (who was last) each 'good night out' this week, has been too 'high' to know or care! So ALL lights stay on. Just one old-style light bulb, 60 Watts, left on in the toilet all year, is an invisible downstream 250 kilogrammes, a quarter of a tonne, more CO₂ unleashed into the heavens! Get that! And is it really 'upstream'? We, and our descendants get to breathe it in time.

I could switch my electric fire on for 20 whole minutes – luxury now! - and still do less damage than that one old WC light bulb left on 8 hours overnight!

Obsessive? Perhaps! But carbon will be the currency folks. And I'm advocating happiness not gloom. (And avoiding doom!) We can easily meet our human needs, enjoy the ways that power and technology can liberate us, and stay bright. We can keep warm enough to be healthy. We can moderate frequent long-haul flights. We can re-consider buying that big 4WD for the commute to London (especially when the train is so much quicker!) A low carbon lifestyle is entirely compatible with our fundamental and universal desire - to be happy and to avoid suffering: the wisdom that Buddhism and all other faiths offer us!

For some strange reason I woke up early this morning, feeling cold under the thick duvet. Half-awake

I contemplated the cold (and switching on the electric fire!). But my mind strayed (again!) this time to what it would feel like to be sleeping rough - on this freezing windy week. I counted my blessings again (four, and my wife, you will remember!).

I got up, and put on several layers. The fire stayed off as I happily shared these idle musings with you through my laptop computer. Cold body, warm heart.

Thanks reader. If you liked this, do go forth and shine a beacon! Of happy low carbon futures...

Some references:

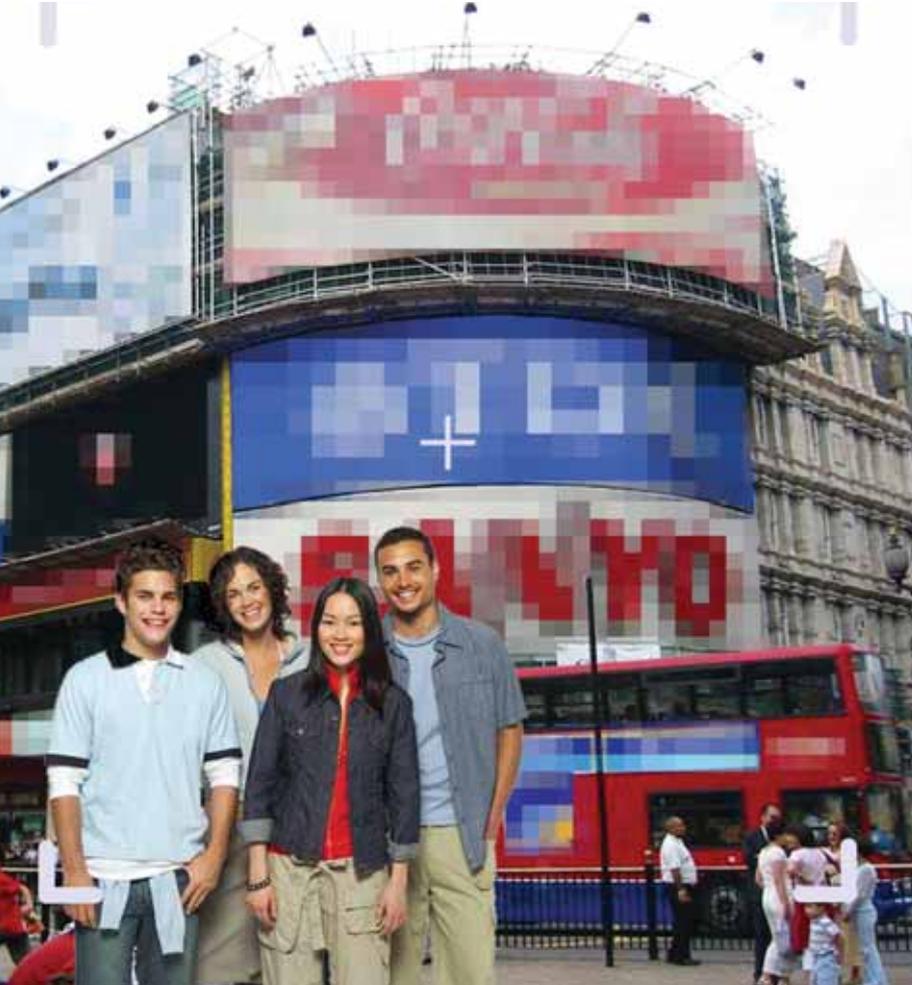
www.carbon-sense.org Making carbon dioxide common sense

www.shake-up.org Making CO₂ visible

www.absconsulting.uk.com

www.gci.org.uk - check this one out – the ultimate global solution - to both climate change and poverty – rapidly gaining support "Contraction and Convergence"

Photograph Courtesy of Dave Hampton



“What if your computer locks up your dissertation because it detects a copyright-infringing mp3 or image?”

Products are not just becoming more intelligent: they're starting to control our behaviour too.

Dan Lockton discusses the phenomenon.

Designs on your..freedom

Imagine if you found that your expensive, top-of-the-range new digital camera refused to photograph you and your friends standing in Piccadilly Circus because of the presence of the TDK, Sanyo and other trademarked logos behind you. Or if your camcorder video of baby's first steps cut out suddenly because baby walked in front of a TV?

In fact, these situations aren't that unlikely in the not-to-distant future. Just as digital rights have become a major issue for movie studios and record companies, with cases over software (Napster, and more recently, Grokster) being big news, the hardware itself is receiving increasing attention. And not just in terms of copyright control. As software and hardware converge, there are more opportunities for products to be designed with features that restrict or enforce modes of behaviour or use on the part of the consumer, for a variety of reasons—commercial, certainly, but also environmental, social, psychological and even moral.

The process is not driven entirely by the manufacturers, but also appears to have legislative

blessing: the Digital Millennium Copyright Act in the US and its equivalents worldwide, together with measures such as the proposed INDUCE Act, all begin to limit the rights of the consumer, turning a position of 'do what you like unless there's a law against it' into 'you may do only these things that we allow you to.' And even if that's spun as 'enshrining consumers' rights,' it's worth looking at how this kind of thinking could affect the products we use.

Architectures of control

Whilst many examples with primarily commercial control intentions are connected with enforcing intellectual property rights, from copy-protection on DVDs to more complex 'analogue hole' patching algorithms of the kind required to identify copyrighted material 'in the wild,' as in the camera and camcorder examples above, there are other ways that 'architectures of control' can be built into products for commercial reasons, often for 'lock-in' purposes.

Some are technology-intensive, such as Hewlett-Packard's alleged use of embedded chips in printer cartridges which 'expire' the

cartridge, even if unused, on a certain date, thus forcing the user to buy new cartridges (possibly HP's most profitable activity, if some reports are to be believed). Others are very simple, such as the Audi A2's bonnet which apparently cannot be opened by the car's owner, only by an authorised dealer.

On a very basic level, even having to buy replacement blades from the original manufacturer to fit your particular choice of razor is a great example of product lock-in, and clearly to some extent (especially spare parts) many products have incorporated architectures of control for decades, if not centuries. It's just that now, technology allows it to become a much more pervasive aspect of product design and engineering. The field is moved on even further by the ability for embedded technology to modify the behaviour of a product after purchase—such as the TiVo personal video recorder's automatic update which removed and modified certain features, entirely out of the consumer's control.

Equally, there are many ways that architectures of control can be used with more socially beneficial

intentions. Breathalyser interlocks for car ignitions have been mooted for decades, but are now starting to become more prevalent in some jurisdictions, usually for previously convicted drink-drivers. Seatbelt-ignition interlocks were championed by Lee Iacocca of Ford (and latterly Chrysler) twenty-five years ago but met with public indifference; the proposed External Vehicle Speed Control system (mainly aimed at motorcyclists) which would allow roadside equipment to control the speed of vehicles compulsorily fitted with the necessary speed limiters, may prove sufficiently invasive of personal liberty to drag the public out of its apathy.

Other architectures of social control in design can coerce rather than force. Examples include blue lighting in nightclub toilets to make intravenous drug use difficult, and growing opportunities in terms of encouraging consumers to behave in more environmentally friendly ways—even down to the level of making rubbish bins smaller to make people more conscious of the amount of waste they produce. On this environmental point, there is the prospect of products which continually monitor their energy efficiency and cease to function if the intended operation would cause excessive energy use—or at the very least, cajole owners into operating them more efficiently (e.g. fridges with audible alarms to indicate the door being improperly closed).

The future

As consumers, should we be worried? It depends on at what level you engage with the products

So what are the rights and wrongs?

In all fields, academic and practical, lock-ins can stifle innovation and cause path dependence, especially when it actually becomes illegal to modify products or processes to improve them or enable extra functionality (the ‘freedom to tinker’).

There is also a presumptuousness about some restrictive designs which could have a negative effect on people who use products in ways other than those explicitly intended by the manufacturer—to the extent that the RNIB has started investigating how digital rights management can affect people who use third-party accessibility software such as screen readers.

More information on this subject at :

www.danlockton.co.uk/research/architectures.html

you buy and use. If products are merely appliances to you, the only difference you may notice is slight inconvenience—if you’re buying music online, you won’t be able to use it on different devices, and once that iPod packs up, out of warranty, you’ll have to buy all that music again if you choose a different music player as a replacement. You’ll know exactly when you need to buy a new washing machine, because the old one will shut down after a predetermined period and display a message telling you it has reached its optimum lifetime. It may even order a replacement for you.

It may be that, within a few years, a selling point of certain products is their lack of rigid control architectures: cars that allow you exceed speed limits at your own risk, or ‘specialist’ cameras that allow photography of trademarked

logos (all at a price premium over the ‘restricted’ products, of course). And if laws make such unrestricted products illegal, then an underground scene of product hacks is bound to flourish.

Should we be worried as academics? It may seem tenuous, but whatever field you’re in, debates over intellectual property will become higher profile over the next few years. And as technology also increases its pervasiveness, there may well come a point where your computer locks up your hard disk (including your dissertation, the night before submission) because it detects a copyright-infringing mp3 or image that someone’s sent you. It’s not that unlikely.

Dan Lockton is an industrial design engineer currently on the Cambridge-MIT Institute Technology Policy programme at the Judge Institute of Management.



Photographs courtesy of Dan Lockton

Photo: 500,000 tons of electrical consumer goods are dumped each year in the UK, including 3 million fridges/freezers. Products which cease to operate at their optimum lifetime, in conjunction with appropriate take-back legislation, could allow a more structured approach to recycling of these goods.

COLLEGE FEES

In this issue we adopt a four-pronged approach to investigate College fees at the graduate level, which have been in the limelight recently. We report on information obtained from the Bursars' Committee, MCR Presidents, the Graduate Union, and the annual accounts of Colleges as reported in The Reporter.

For the 2003-2004 academic year, official figures from the Bursars' Committee, indicate that Graduate College Fees were in the range £ 1839 (Trinity) - £ 1923 (Fitzwilliam and Lucy Cavendish). A total of 4,359 students were in residence in 31 Colleges, contributing a total amount of £ 8, 223,732, which amounts to an average of £1887 per student.

In October 2004, Dr Reid, Chair of the Bursars' Committee, circulated a letter to Heads of Houses (copied to Bursars and Senior Tutors) asking Colleges for their comments on introducing a differential fee system at the graduate level, whereby graduate students would be categorised into groups of which 2 examples are given: Home/EU vs. Overseas, and Publicly-funded vs. Non-Publicly.

The proposal caused outrage in some circles, leading to the question of an unfair treatment of overseas students who contribute widely to the diversity of life at Cambridge. Do overseas graduates benefit more from College fees than UK students? In other words, do Colleges spend more money on overseas students? But the major question should be whether graduate students would benefit more from an increase in fees.

Our investigations show that while it is unquestionable that Colleges need the money they receive from College fees to meet their expenses. a break-down of fees spent by Colleges on graduate students does not seem to exist. Indeed, Dr Reid's comments (see interview) suggest that Colleges do not have any plans concerning how an increase in College fees at the graduate level be spent. This would suggest that the proposals to introduce differential College fees were aimed to be an easy way to get more money from graduates to fill the deficit faced by Colleges. GOWN believes that any increase in fees should be spent on improving facilities for graduate students. We also encourage more transparency in the way Colleges spend the money they receive from graduates.

Our survey of MCR Presidents suggests a lack of communication on the one hand between MCR committees and the students they represent, and on the other, between MCR Presidents and the Bursars.

GOWN wishes to acknowledge Dr G. A. Reid, the Bursars' Committee, the Graduate Union and MCR Presidents for providing the information we used in the story.

Send us your comments editor@gownmagazine.com



An Accounting Nightmare

Britt Peterson

Britt Peterson browses a special edition of The Reporter to investigate how Graduate College fees are spent.

If you reach an arm down the bureaucratic rabbit-hole where Cambridge bursars seem to dwell, pluck one out by the scruff of its neck and ask, "Please, sir or madam, what exactly are my college fees paying for?" chances are you will be somewhat snifflily directed to the Cambridge Reporter Special Edition of March 18th, 2005, the College accounts edition. I recently spent an afternoon poring over this phone book-size collation of all college accounts for the fiscal year 2004, and found myself not much closer to unlocking the mysteries of graduate college fees.

The Reporter lets each college decide how to present its information, which leads to an intriguing but often confusing disparity in styles. The pages devoted to the King's College accounts, for example, are chatty and simple, with useful summaries, footnotes sending you every which way, and inspirational statements of purpose. Trinity and St. John's Colleges, on the other hand, keep it strictly business: no extra words except for the occasional, curt, "amount brought forward," just rows and rows of labelled numbers in section headings marked by Roman

numerals. In general, the colleges with money to burn seem to put the least emphasis on readability.

Moving beyond style, the accounts tend to include the same basic information in regards to college fees. Gonville and Caius College is typical in this sense. An initial overview section compares income (£ 8,379,767) to expenditure (£ 8,533,788) and dutifully notes the deficit (£ 60,733 – no trip to Disneyland this year kids!). Later subsections reveal how much of this income was derived from college fees, and divide that into supported undergrads (£ 1,423,540), private income undergrads (£ 121,137), and post-grads (£ 268,842), for a total of £ 1,813,524, or about a fifth of the general income. Educational expenditure, which is where college fees appear to be directed, splits into teaching costs (£ 616,777), tutoring costs (£ 473,270), admissions costs (£ 127,421), research costs (£ 414,086), scholarships and awards (£ 457,196), and educational facilities costs (£ 352,019), for a total of £ 3,442,769. That's 40 percent of the total expenditure of Caius for 2004, and almost double the amount of income produced with fees (the rest is made up through trusts, donations and mysterious "other forms of income").

Beyond the general data, however, the Reporter doesn't delve at all

into the traditionally controversial issue of college fees for graduate students. If the lump sum of college fees, both undergrad and grad, goes towards a set of expenses mostly aimed at undergrads, how much educational bang are we actually getting for our college fee buck? Most graduate students don't benefit from money spent on teaching, tutoring, or research within the college, and we use the "educational facilities" proportionally much less than undergrads do. Yet, according to the Reporter, our fees help finance these areas.

It may be consoling to note that graduate college fees generate only, at least in Caius, 3% of the total income; these fees, while onerous on the individual level, don't go very far at all on the collective level. Still, the very manner in which college accounts are written up in the Reporter, combining the graduate and undergraduate fees into one number which is then plugged directly into the "educational expenses" equation, seems to ignore the disparity in educational services rendered by the colleges to undergrads and graduates. What are our fees actually being spent on? The Reporter doesn't say, exactly.



The Students' Perspective: A Survey of MCR Presidents

Arnaud Bonnet

A survey of all 31 Colleges was carried out to investigate the views of MCR Presidents about College Fees. The aim of the survey was to determine what MCR committees know about graduate college fees and how they are spent. MCR Presidents were e-mailed a survey of 6 questions with "yes/no" responses for 5 questions and "yes/no/not sure" responses for 1 question (Question 3). 16 replies (52 %) were returned to us, of which 2 were from graduate Colleges, and the results are presented in charts below for easy comparison.

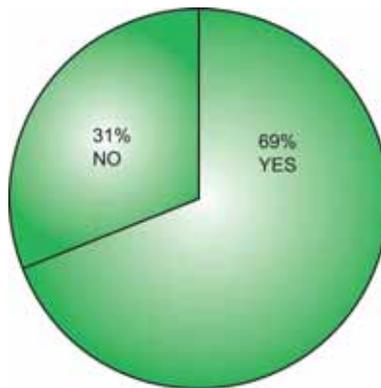
Interestingly, our survey showed that a majority of MCR Presidents did not think that they, or the graduate students they represent, understood how college fees were spent at the graduate level (Questions 1 & 2), which would suggest a lack of communication between MCR Presidents and the administrative officers of colleges, and between MCR committees and the students they represent. Only 44 % of respondents thought that their college was willing to discuss how graduate college fees are spent (Question 3).

Alarming, 81 % of MCRs were not provided with a break-down of how college fees are spent (Question 4) at the graduate level. It would have been assumed that Colleges would have been more accountable to their students. The high percentage would suggest that in answering question 1, some MCR Presidents based their answer on sources of information other than an official communication from their College.

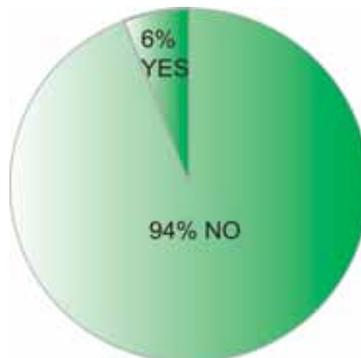
While the opinion was equally split on the question of whether MCR members benefit adequately from College fees (Question 5), some MCR Presidents commented that the graduate student body of their College was not provided with enough accommodation. Two respondents noted that while hardship funds and bursaries were available in their college, in a common fund for both undergraduate and graduate students, it appeared that graduate students did not benefit from the funds or were biased against.

On a positive note, 81 % of MCR Presidents agreed that their MCRs were well funded by their College (Question 6).

1. Do you have a thorough appreciation of how the Graduate College Fees are spent in your college?



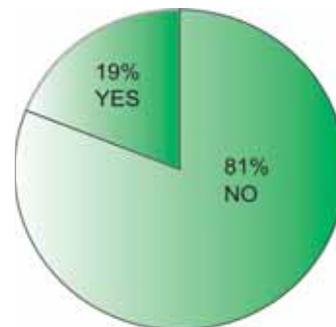
2. Does the majority of members of your MCR know how their College fees are spent?



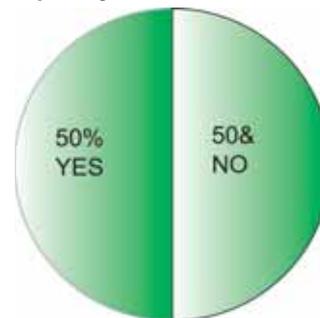
3. Is your College willing to discuss how your College fees are spent with your MCR?



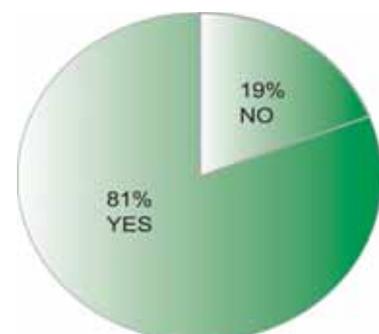
4. Is your MCR provided with a break-down of how College fees are spent (annual/monthly etc...)?



5. Do you think that the members of your MCR benefit from Graduate College Fees adequately?



6. In your opinion, does your MCR receive enough funding from the College?



College fees are one of the most discussed topics by graduate students. But students are not the only ones concerned about them: they are an important source of funding to Colleges. Elefthria Kioupritzi finds out more from the Bursars' Committee.

We contacted the bursars of 28 colleges individually with questions about how College fees are spent at the graduate level. Most of our phone calls and e-mails remained unanswered, and 3 responses directed us to the Bursars' Committee for information. Dr Laurie Friday, Secretary to The Board of Graduate Studies, informed us that the BoGS does not deal with College fees. Except for Selwyn, which provided a detailed reply, our questions were discussed collectively at a recent Fees Sub-Committee meeting, and were answered by Dr. G. A. Reid, Senior Bursar at St. John's, and Clerk to the Bursars' Committee on behalf of the committee.

Quite disappointingly, the replies provided by Dr Reid failed to highlight the benefits of graduate College fees to **graduate** students. While he suggested that a reduction in College fees would affect the provision of educational facilities to students, we believe that educational facilities provided by Colleges are mainly aimed at undergraduates. Few graduate students receive supervision from their College or use their College libraries. The mentorship system introduced by some Colleges to allow students to interact with members of the academic staff is neglected and failed to achieve any result. Pastoral care for students is lacking in most Colleges, and the majority of students will only see their graduate tutor once in their lifetime at Cambridge. Moreover, Colleges often use the statement that the life of a graduate student is based in academic departments as an excuse to avoid explaining how graduate fees benefit directly to graduate students or investing in them. How do graduates benefit from the fees? It is time for Colleges to recognise that graduate students are a rich attribute to College life and more Colleges should aim to provide the correct level of facilities to graduates.

Which aspects of College expenses do College fees cover? College fees provide for the

educational expenditure of the College, but do not generally cover the full costs of that expenditure.

Some background may assist. Following the publication in 1997 of the Dearing Report into Higher Education, the Government reviewed the position of College fees and imposed a reduction in real terms in the level of those fees which are publicly-funded. It was agreed that those fees would diminish by one-third over the ten-year period starting from 1999-2000 (though the effect on the Colleges is of a somewhat lesser decrease by reason of the removal of the former deduction from H.E.F.C.E. funding received by the University on account of College fee income). It was further agreed that the reduction would fall on the College

Is it a large sum of money in a College's yearly budget?

The total sum received by way of College fees is a substantial one, but it is generally not the major part of the whole income in respect of a College's internal activities (tuition, domestic management, accommodation and staff, and catering). Colleges of course vary in the detail of their annual budgets, both as regards proportions and absolute size, but fee income (graduate and undergraduate together) might represent perhaps a 20% to 40% of a College's total such income.

Is the money intended for the same purpose(s) annually?

Broadly speaking, yes. The need

Bursars Under Investigation

undergraduate fee only, although the level of reduction was to take into account both publicly-funded graduate and undergraduate fees. Before 1999-2000 the College graduate fee had been set at 60% of the College undergraduate fee, to reflect the fact that no supervision costs are ordinarily incurred by Colleges in relation to Graduate Students. Since that time the College graduate fee has increased year by year from its 1998-99 figure at percentage levels fixed by the D.f.E.S. In principle the College could charge non-publicly-funded students a different (higher) level of fee, and that was considered recently by the Colleges, but after careful review it was decided that the proposal should not be proceeded with.

The College fee may be applied to the whole range of education expenditure by Colleges, including Tutorial and welfare provision, library and computing provision, the staff and other infrastructure of the College in place for the purpose of the education of students (costs being apportioned appropriately in relation to items whose purpose is mixed).

for Colleges to fit expenditure to constrained levels of income means that new developments in relation to the educational expenditure of Colleges are very limited.

Do you think that students don't pay enough in relation to the facilities that Colleges provide?

Looked at from the point of view of the student, the desire to minimise fees is understandable. From the point of view of the Colleges, the need to manage the real-terms reduction in fees referred to in answer to the first question above presents challenges. Ultimately a reduction in the real level of fee income cannot be contained without damage to educational provision.

How much would Colleges benefit from higher fees and what more would they provide to the students?

This is not a question that has yet been addressed in Colleges, as there has been no realistic prospect of such higher fee income. (The only unconstrained area of College fees is that relating to privately-funded

undergraduates. But they form such a small proportion of the whole student population that increased fees in that area is unlikely to raise any substantial sum.)

Do you think that graduate students who are in their fourth year of study or above should pay a small fee to their College since they still benefit from College facilities?

The treatment for College fee purposes of Graduate Students who have completed the minimum number of terms of research for the Ph.D. degree is a matter for each College, and there is no collective policy in that regard. Two views seem equally legitimate: the College fee may be regarded as paying for access to facilities each term; or the payment of nine terms of College fees during the period from the effective date of registration for the Ph.D. can be regarded as a total payment for those nine terms and a reasonable necessary additional period to complete the work for the degree. The answer to your question will depend on which view a College takes.

There is one further thing that I should add. Under the revised College fee arrangements introduced in 1999, each College produces for the University each year an audited Education Memorandum, which shows the whole fee income of the College and the educational expenditure of the College divided into a number of broad heads. The deficit of income from expenditure shows the extent to which the cost of the educational activities of the College are met from other (generally endowment) sources.

So you want to know about Differential College Fees?

Yes

Are you sure?

Definitely

OK then. Ask away!

How did the Differential College Fees saga begin?

Dr. Reid, Senior Bursar at St. John's College circulated a "Consultation paper concerning the introduction of differential levels of college graduate fees", approved by the Colleges' Committee in October 2004. The paper was subsequently leaked to the Graduate Union.

What did the paper say?

Well, it sought the views of Senior Tutors and Bursars on:

- Whether there should be an introduction of one/ more levels of College Graduate fee and
- if so, would they wish to see different levels for Home/EU and Overseas students, or for Publicly-funded/ non-publicly funded students, or some other divisions (and if so what?) and
- whether they would introduce such an arrangement in any event, in the event that most colleges agree, in the event that all colleges agree, or in no event.

Bit of a bore, isn't he?

A timeline might help!

1993 Differential rates of College Graduate fee were discussed for publicly-funded/ non publicly funded students. The traditional argument against differential fees was that they represent the actual cost of provision, an argument eroded by progressive fee reductions in real terms imposed by the government. The discussion was shelved due to lack of time.

1995 The Fees Sub-Committee returned to the issue in the context of the possible introduction of differential rates for Overseas and Home/ EU students. However, the exemption from the Race Relations Act afforded to University fees at the time did not extend to college fees.

1997 The issue of the exemption was raised with the Government in light of the Dearing report, and "rectified" by a change in regulation in 1998. There is now no legal impediment to the charging of Differential levels of fees for Overseas and Home/EU College fees.

What choices do the Colleges face in the paper?

1) A single, undifferentiated fee, maintaining student equality. Reid argues that the principle of the fee representing the actual cost has been eroded by external constraints.

2) Different Overseas and Home/ additional income is raised, and this distinction is recognised by university fees, but the principle of equality is overridden.

3) Different levels for Publicly funded and privately funded students- again, additional income raised. Reid includes a ridiculously ambiguous sentence: "There is little case for self-denial by extending constraints beyond their inevitable scope." However, at no point in the paper is the apparent necessity for "additional income" justified. In the words of Sir Humphrey Appleby:

"Budgeting isn't about asking for what you need. It's about pitching for as much as you can get away

Differential College Fees?

Alex Painter is Secretary of the Graduate Union. He writes about the saga of College fees and how the suggestion of an increase in graduate college fees was suggested.

Yes, but that's not for here. In any case, this is serious stuff.

So what was the background to Reid's paper? If you ask me he's got too much time on his hands.

blurring of the definition to overcome that might lead to "issues regarding indirect racial discrimination."

So what did the colleges say?

We don't know. Their replies haven't been leaked and they refer us to the Fees Sub-Committee when we ask- closing ranks appears to be the norm.

What did the GU say?

I'm glad you asked me that. The courageous, daring and damnably good-looking GU Executive, lead by President Ruth Keeling.....

I'm sensing a conflict of interest?

Not at all! The Executive prepared a detailed response (available on-line at www.gradunion.cam.ac.uk), strongly opposing any introduction of differential college fees. Reasons included the impact on research standards (the consultation focuses on revenue creation as opposed to academic standards), implications on access, hardship, fairness, administration (for students with multiple funding bodies), college equality, the basis of the college fee itself (it is already perceived as excessive), the financial strategy of the colleges (alternative procedures are not considered by the Consultation paper) and last, but by no means least, Consultation. The paper was not discussed, or even mentioned, to the graduate population.

Woah! That's a big issue to discuss in secret!

Tell me about it. So that's the background.

So what's the situation?

Well, you wouldn't believe this but we still don't know! The proposals have apparently been quietly shelved.

But in a way, it's not so much the discussion about Differential College Fees, but the principle of non-consultation which really gets me.

I concur. It's remarkable how we seem to agree all the time. We might be the same person!

Any further info?:

"Why I should have been elected Pope: differential voting for Overseas Cardinals" by Dr. G. A. Reid

"The Phoenix Four: Differential Pay-offs for Management and Workers" by Dr. M. G. Rover

"Reid: a life in differentials" – published Grabbitt and Runne

Thus, out of a potential £400,000 coming from Graduate College fees, Selwyn received only £219,636; a 50 % deficit from the expected income.

According to Mr Downer, the money attributed to graduate students is not broken out separately. Selwyn incurs a deficit of £1.33 million before income for endowment and conference. This represents a loss of £2,264 per grad which, represents twice the College fees paid by graduates.

The college fees (including graduate and undergraduate fees) are not only directed to the maintenance of buildings, sports ground, kitchen, and library but also to the salaries of administrative & cleaning staff, porters, tutorial officers and generally to the welfare of graduates within the college. Scholarships, travel grants and support grants are not included in the expenses which College fees fund.

When asked whether students beyond their 4th year of study should pay a small fee to the colleges since they can use the college facilities, Mr Downer replied that the facilities, whether used or not, are provided by the College, which has to pay for their maintenance. Hence, all students should ideally pay their fees.

The MCR President explained how good the communication was with the college. He noted that the college is open discuss its financial situation with the MCR. From his point of view it is very difficult to break down expenses on a detailed level in a mixed undergraduate / graduate college. Moreover a very high proportion of students benefit from the college facilities, including accommodation.

We infer from the information gathered, that Selwyn is probably a good example of excellent communication between College officers and students. By providing us with the information we hoped to get about College fees, we believe that Selwyn has a transparent accounting procedure which is to be encouraged at other Colleges.

We thank Mr Downer and Daniel Jaeggi for their contributions.



Elefthria Kioupritzi

While researching our story, Selwyn stood out as the only College whose Bursar, Mr Nick Downer, provided us with some data regarding how Selwyn invests the College fees from graduates. Our positive impressions of Selwyn for its collaborative attitude, were confirmed by Selwyn's MCR President, Daniel Jaeggi, who answered positively to our survey questions, and commented that the College was willing to collaborate with the MCR committee.

212 graduate students are members of Selwyn. Graduate students represent 36% of the student body. Only half of the graduates paid college fees last year, while the other half benefited from fee deferral options which were granted by the College.

GU Interview

Elefthria Kioupritzi and Megan Meredith-Lobay met Ruth Keeling, Graduate Union President, to discuss her term as President of this historically controversial organization.

We both met Ruth for the first time and she is chatty and passionate about her work for the GU. The GU offices are organized and fresh, and reflect Ruth's meticulous sense of organisation. In a few weeks, Ruth finishes her term as President and won't run again for a second term of office. She urges everyone to participate in the activities of the GU – the slogan used to advertise the election is "START WITH US" – and vote in the elections on the 18th of May.

Do you think that the short-term goals that you set for the organization when you were elected last November have been achieved? Did you have enough time to achieve them?

What I really came to the GU to do was to set it back up on its feet. As you are probably aware, the organization went through a crisis period during its previous administration. When I took over after winning a by-election, the internal operations of the organisation were a mess, there was a big question mark over the University's continued recognition of the GU, and we'd lost credibility with graduate students. My main goal was to get the organisation up and working again, and able to contribute productively to supporting graduate students at Cambridge.

I don't think it was the philosophy of the GU which was at fault but it was a question of implementation. We were working to a very tight timetable at the beginning, because some in the University wanted to discontinue financial support for the GU. We had to produce a working budget and improve our accounting procedures but, at the same time, the larger project was to justify our continued existence and to define

our place in the University's support structure.

To begin with, we organized several strategy meetings with graduate representatives, senior University officials, and CUSU reps to define our roles and responsibilities. This broad strategic review led to a substantial report, which we presented to the University's Standing Advisory Committee on Student Matters. The report attempted to more tightly define the organisation's core objectives. Our key priority was to refocus on our representative functions, while at the same time ensuring that our existing services were delivered in a professional way. One of the key findings of the review, however, was that in order to achieve these goals, we needed to strengthen the GU's administrative infrastructure to ensure year-on-year continuity. Some of the apparent failures of the GU can be traced to the lack of support from existing university structures.

I was enormously gratified by the positive response we received from the University, particularly when there was such concern at the beginning. But obviously, the other element of the project is to demonstrate to the graduate student body that our plans for reorganisation will help improve the services that we offer to graduates. At the same time as the presidential election on May 18th, we'll be asking graduates to vote their support for our proposed constitutional changes which we believe will strengthen the organisation's capacity to deliver. That's a tall order for a seven month job. But I do feel like the GU's profile has been improving. We're seeing more people coming through the GU lounge every day, for example, and business is up in the shop.

So were you able to draw a line about what the GU can and should be able to do within the University?

Well it wasn't so much to draw a line but to draw the connections. It was about how we fit into the system. Our discussions with CUSU revealed that there was actually not a great

deal of dispute over our spheres of responsibilities. Having two perspectives on the issues, and working together, is actually very useful for both organisations. They tend to have a national focus as well as an undergraduate focus, where we bring more of an international perspective as well as a graduate focus. In our strategic review, we identified how we can make a contribution as a hub for graduate students. It's about being a forum for graduates to discuss issues, air their concerns, and get support. I still think there's a role for a coordination point above the college level because on some occasions you just can't take issues any further within a college or department. And I see this as our role; to assist with the transfer of information across colleges and faculties, and to represent those perspectives to the University.

Much of the work we do focuses on the coordination of a very complex network within the University involving committees, faculties, college MCRs, and the University administration. We also offer targeted services to graduate groups like running our regular parent group. We also run the shop. But my objective this year has not been to expand the role of the Union but to strengthen its capacity.

Did you have a clear idea of the GU situation before becoming president? Do you think that the information you had as a candidate reflected the real situation?

I did try to inform myself about the situation before deciding to run. I spoke with a number of University officials about their concerns as well as with the GU staff, previous Exec members, and CUSU to get a sense of what was really going on. As MCR president at Pembroke, I'd been frustrated at the inability of the GU to deliver substantive support for college-level activities.

It was a bigger mess than you could have imagined, but that was really because nobody actually knew what was going on. No one seemed to have the full picture. For example, nobody had done a review of the shop's operations, profitability, and sustainability. I used the strategic review report as an opportunity to lay out the historical problems and work through what we think will be effective solutions to them. Our accounts clerk has done a fantastic

job with preparing the accounts for audit and so we now have a much clearer picture of our expenditure and income in the past.

You succeeded in securing the financial support of the University with a large annual budget. But the GU has sometimes run a deficit in prior years. Do you think that the money provided by the University should be increased in the future to allow the GU to overcome its losses and face the future more positively?

No, I don't think the GU's issues amount to a question of money. Our historical debt is actually not very significant, as we also have some reserves. And as you noted, the GU is now well supported financially. I firmly believe that what we need is stable financial support from the University. It's important that the university provides the same level of funding year-on-year. Much of the money from the budget actually goes into staff support because we are outside of the college structure and so we have our own facilities to run, our own accounts to administer, etc. so the money can't be changing every year. And since the Student Exec inevitably turns over from year to year, we need a commitment of continued support from them, and not only financial support. In the future, we might be able to generate additional income streams, but we need to be able to manage our core functions within our University allocation.

Do you have a good relationship with the University? Do you have discussions with graduate tutors? Do you meet often?

I attend meetings of the Graduate Tutors' Committee, the Senior Tutors' Committee, and their subcommittees on Education, and Welfare and Finance. I've also worked hard to develop good working relations with senior University officials, including the pro-Vice Chancellors and Professor Richard, the Vice Chancellor. We've been very grateful for their interest and support. I want to keep these lines of communication open for the next people who come in. We are setting up a University Liaison Group to support the GU so that those relationships remain from year to year. It can be difficult for student reps when they first come in to understand the relationships between all these different people.

For example, graduate tutors can have an important role in their colleges, but many also have roles in their departments. They sit on different committees, and some also have roles in the central administration. So the same person may be wearing several different hats – it can be quite hard to come in as a student rep and negotiate your way around this. We have worked to establish the administrative structure in the GU which can manage the complexity of this information year-on-year, allowing student reps to come in and find out quickly what's going on.

Have you managed to strengthen the bonds between the University and the GU?

I think the profile of the GU has improved and the work we have done with the University has helped to build bridges. I think they appreciate the contribution that we make. I'm very aware that I'm often the only student voice on some of these committees. I've been struck by the willingness of the senior members to get involved and discuss our perspectives. I'm frequently invited to take an active part in discussions shaping the development of the University. You do need to know how to go about getting information out of the University, since it's not always clear. That's actually where the GU has a real role to play.

Can the GU provide more space and facilities for the students in the future? Or has it reached a plateau with regards to what it can offer?

The GU has great facilities with its lounge in the center of town. We've done well opening the space up for graduate use. We have a new computer lab, and wireless internet access available in the lounge for students. A number of societies book our facilities for their meetings, and we're open all day, every weekday. You can come in and read the papers and have a cup of coffee. We also have a weekly drop-in welfare session for people to come in and discuss their personal and academic concerns.

Of course there is still a lot more that people can do with the organisation if they bring in energy and ideas. A visitor to my office said something I really like – he said, "When you came in, the house was on fire and

you had to put it out and stabilise the building". Now you know it's still a bit shabby around the edges and could do with a fresh lick of paint – but it's all there and I feel good about that. I think we have a great platform established for moving forward, and there are plenty of opportunities for people who want to make something of it.

You have cleared up a lot of space; it seems you have done a good job. Do you think many people know about the current situation at GU? We see that you have posters about the forthcoming elections – has this been advertised well?

We've been working on improving our communication mechanisms – our website has been substantially enhanced, and we send out regular email bulletins and postings to MCRs and faculty reps. We've been advertising the shop and this has shown real results in terms of turnover. We have designed a new and fresh logo and we'll be getting this out on posters and leaflets in the lead-up to the elections on May 18th.

The GU does not seem to have organised University-wide events recently. Don't you think that events can attract people to the GU and help you to spread your message?

As far as Ents go, I think we've played a good role in encouraging intercollegiate activities and events for groups that are not very well covered by the colleges. Student parents are a really good example of that. I've also wanted to make our facilities a functional space for use by anyone. There are newspapers that come in every day and you can come in and hang out, do your work – or have a break from it. In my opinion, particularly while we've been trying to rebuild our capacity, this approach has been better than just running a few bombastic events that quickly fade from memory.

That being said, the GU has space for people with new ideas and enthusiasm. Part of our plan for restructuring the organisation includes the addition of a Social committee and a GU officer with an events portfolio. I just don't see one-off, big events as our core defining purpose. It's been a problem in the past that the GU tried to cover so many things that it lost sight of what it needed to achieve on a daily basis.

So are you trying to support events outside the GU?

Yes, absolutely, with initiatives like our online events calendar that advertises things going on around the University. There's so much already going on in Cambridge and people often just don't know about it.

Isn't it weird that you get money from graduates and then give it back to them to host events?

Well, that's not actually what we do. We don't ask for our affiliation fees from colleges in order to support events. For most colleges, there are functioning social networks at this level anyway, and we are not trying to replicate what's already out there. The GU's role here is really about coordination.

Do you have good relations with your Oxford equivalent? Do you have any affiliation or collaboration with them?

Yes, we have contact with the equivalent body at Oxford. What's very interesting, actually, is that they don't have an independent graduate organisation anymore. They are a part of Oxford's student union, OUSU. We talked with them about how they fit in to that structure and how that works for graduate representation. We looked seriously at all of the options for our own structure – whether we could be working closer, in a more formalised way, with CUSU in order to better achieve our goals. Their ultimate comment was that they found graduate representation suffered from being incorporated into the larger union; participation levels dropped, as did the ability of graduate voices to be heard.

Do you think that a one year term is sufficient for a President to fully implement their vision

for the organisation?

Well, for me, I was elected in November and when my replacement is elected in May, I will only have had worked for about six months. But in any case, I don't think it's completely about one vision. Part of what we've worked to develop is the new structure for the Union – which we're asking people to support in the upcoming referendum – which we hope will allow space for strategic thinking and development looking beyond a single Presidential term. I think we need many voices contributing to that.

Interestingly, we looked at whether or not the one year Presidency was too long. We did wonder whether participation would be higher if the term of the Presidency was shorter, organized by semester, because it's difficult for graduates to find a year out of their PhDs. Sometimes a full year doesn't fit into people's long term plans. It's not about a single personality. I mean, the person has to come in and build on an organisation that exists beyond one person's term. I hope that I've been able to make a contribution to this overall effort.

If a President is doing a good job for the GU, surely it would be good to just keep them on?

Well, you can't do more than two terms; there's a legal restriction on that. A second sabbatical year wouldn't be an option for me; I do need to get back to my PhD at some point! But my real wish for the GU is that more people see its potential and get involved. It's really about getting as many people and perspectives involved in the running of the organisation as possible.

In your by-election manifesto, you mentioned that you would campaign for an extension of the opening hours of the libraries. Did you achieve this goal?

Actually, there's recently been a bequest to support keeping the UL open on Saturday afternoons, and the University's 800th fundraising campaign includes increased support for the library as one of its objectives, so I'm very pleased about this. My broader concern has been about access to work space for graduates, particularly after hours. This more often affects humanities students, which is kind of odd because you would think that the security concerns would be less significant than for scientists working in labs! Of course, none of this can be simply solved in a seven-month period, but I have pushed this issue wherever and whenever I can.

Are there projects you planned and wanted to achieve but won't be able to achieve due to a lack of time?

I think it's an ongoing story, really. I really want to see the referendum approved, and I'd like to see new people come forward with fresh ideas to see what they can make of it. It's not going to be all done in this year. I do believe in our proposals as providing a stable platform to build on, but I think the full potential of this place is still to come. I just want to get out there and encourage people to get involved and see what they can do with that. I would like to provide a smooth handover for the new president. I've been preparing an induction pack so they don't need to reinvent the wheel the way I had to when I first came in.

The Family Society & the Graduate Union: working with students with families and kids

Fatima Wang, PhD student at the Judge School of Management, is Executive Member of the Graduate Union committee. She works with the Family Society to coordinate events for those students who have children, and tells us more about the activities organized.

For years now, the Graduate Union and the University Centre have worked together to provide a spacious playroom overlooking the Cam River and the Granta once a week. The Graduate Union Coffee Morning is a wonderful opportunity for graduates to relax and chat over a cup of coffee or tea while their children play with the trampoline, slide, basketball and many other toys.

I have been personally involved with the Coffee Morning since November 2004, as Executive Officer of the Graduate Union. At that time, I had little knowledge of children, but felt that my presence at these sessions could encourage parents to come. Luckily, I worked with two volunteers who knew what to do – Juexi (Alison) Ruan from the Faculty of Education, and Hye-Kyung Park from the Politics Department. I cannot thank them enough! Together, we have enjoyed chatting with graduate parents, playing with the toddlers, and coming up with simple games to entertain kids. It is a time for us to relax, too! Given our own workload during the week, the activities at this playgroup may not be as well organized as we would

hope. However, the support of the parents has never waned and we feel grateful for their understanding.

Last Easter, Helen Chambers (from the Family Society) and I organized a party for families. We were very pleased to receive sponsorship from the Staples, the Graduate Union, as well as the University Centre which provided a free dinner for all children. Easter Fun 2005 attracted more than 80 people, big and small. Activities included face-painting, musical statues, egg rolling and egg-painting. Of course, an egg hunt was also organized! Helen had children's names on each chocolate egg –making hunting even more fun... A craft table to colour and make cards was available for children of all ages. Parents expressed their appreciation of the party. This, along with all the noise, music, running, dancing, laughing and picture taking made all our efforts worthwhile!

I take this opportunity to invite student families to continue to voice your needs so that organizations such as the Family Society and the Graduate Union can make your stay in Cambridge a memorable.

Finding out more....

Coffee Mornings: University Centre, Mill Lane, every Friday 10:30-12:30 (free)

Family Society contact: Helen Chambers, President hlc43@cam.ac.uk
 Graduate Union contact: Fatima Wang, Executive Officer cfw2@cam.ac.uk

for them. With just a few members originally, the society has now expanded to well over 500 members to include not only graduates studying at Cambridge, but also graduates from other Universities now working in Cambridge.

In addition to dinners in colleges, cocktail parties, wine tasting evenings and comedy nights, the society also arranges a variety of film nights, murder mystery parties, punting nights and beer tasting events, as well as organising discounted tickets to one of this year's Summer Balls. Although most events take place during term-time, the GDS is increasingly organising events for its members throughout the year. Members are free to come along to as many or as few events as they wish - you only pay for the ones you attend. Costs are kept to a minimum, with the emphasis on having fun and enjoying yourself while meeting as many new people as possible. The mix of people changes with each event so the people are as varied the nights themselves.

Members are also free to get more involved in the society if they wish, as it is through having so many contacts through its members across the colleges that the Society is so successful at arranging events. If any of the above interests you, and you think the GDS could be for you, then we would be really happy to hear from you.

Membership is free, and to add your name to the mailing list of up and coming events, check out the GDS web-site at:

www.cam.ac.uk/societies/gds

**The Graduate Dining Society
Food, fun and frolics**

Laura Smethurst, President of the Graduate Dining Society sends an invitation for one of the most active graduate societies of Cambridge

Dinners at different colleges? Wine tasting? Cocktail parties? Comedy nights? Graduate student? Sociable? As a relatively new University society, the Graduate Dining Society (GDS) was set up specifically for graduates wanting to meet and mingle with new people outside their college or subject, with the aim of organising fun, sociable events

or email us at

soc-gds-request@lists.cam.ac.uk

and your name will be added to the group. We look forward to hearing from you!

IMAGES COURTESY OF WWW.FREEIMAGES.CO.UK



PHOTOGRAPH BY FATIMA WANG 2005

Disability Resource Centre: Non-Medical Assistants Scheme

Pauline Lee, Assistant Disability Support Co-ordinator

The Disability Resource Centre (DRC) manages a list of people who are interested in providing practical support to disabled students in the University. There are currently 659 undergraduate and graduate students studying at Cambridge with disabilities including mobility, hearing or visual impairment as well as Specific Learning Difficulties. The support that the DRC provides is for students within their academic environment.

The scheme is called the Non-Medical Assistants Scheme and those who work within it are referred to as NMAs. Whilst an opportunity for paid employment, it is not a main source of income, the work, when offered, will be for only a few hours each week during term time and may be only for a few sessions during the year. We recruit from the local population: graduates, graduate students, and other suitable people from outside the University who can offer their expertise and time. (Please note: Cambridge University Post-Graduate and Research students are restricted by University rules as to how many hours they can work.)

What are we looking for?

- Note taking in lectures
- Reading out loud to students or on to tape
- Practical help such a shopping
- Assistance in laboratory work
- Helping someone to pack at the end of term
- Physical help in libraries such as fetching books, lifting them, perhaps turning pages, photocopying
- Typing up dissertations, lecture notes etc
- Buddying or mentoring

At examination time we may seek amanuensis help.

We are now planning ahead for the next academic year and there are skills gaps in our list to fill, particularly in the sciences and maths-based subjects.

The qualities we seek in an NMA are sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others, note-takers with legible handwriting (!) and an appropriate academic background, an understanding of the need for confidentiality and, absolutely essential, reliability.

The Disability Resource Centre acts like an agency. We advertise according to the needs of the students we know of who need help, matching potential helpers with our student clients.

On receipt of one of our application forms, we look at the applicant's skills and background assessing whether there is likely to be a demand for their



experience. If so, we then take up their references, arrange an informal interview and add them to our list. We will offer them induction training.

We also run a 'waiting list' so that at a later date if there is a request that someone on the waiting list matches to, we will contact that NMA applicant to see if they are still available and interested and process their application at that point.

When a student with a disability asks us to find them a helper, we contact all those with the appropriate background giving outline details of the task required and with their consent forward their contact details to that student.

Payment arrangements
The University's Temporary Employ-

ment Service (TES) handles payroll matters on our behalf. Once an assignment is confirmed, we pass the relevant information to the TES who then arrange for the NMA to join the payroll system, they supply timesheets for signing etc. This way all tax and National Insurance requirements are handled at source. The DRC reclaims the costs of this service direct from the student's LEA/funder(as appropriate).

Rates of pay?

The current rate of pay (2005) is £10.00 per hour for note taking. If someone is looking for a voluntary helper we will make that clear when the enquiry is made.

Training

Working with Kirsty Wayland, our Disability Equality Training Co-ordinator we organise induction training sessions for NMAs, lasting about 2 hours and are usually lunchtime sessions. We are also planning to offer note-taking training in the future.

Sensitivity and confidentiality

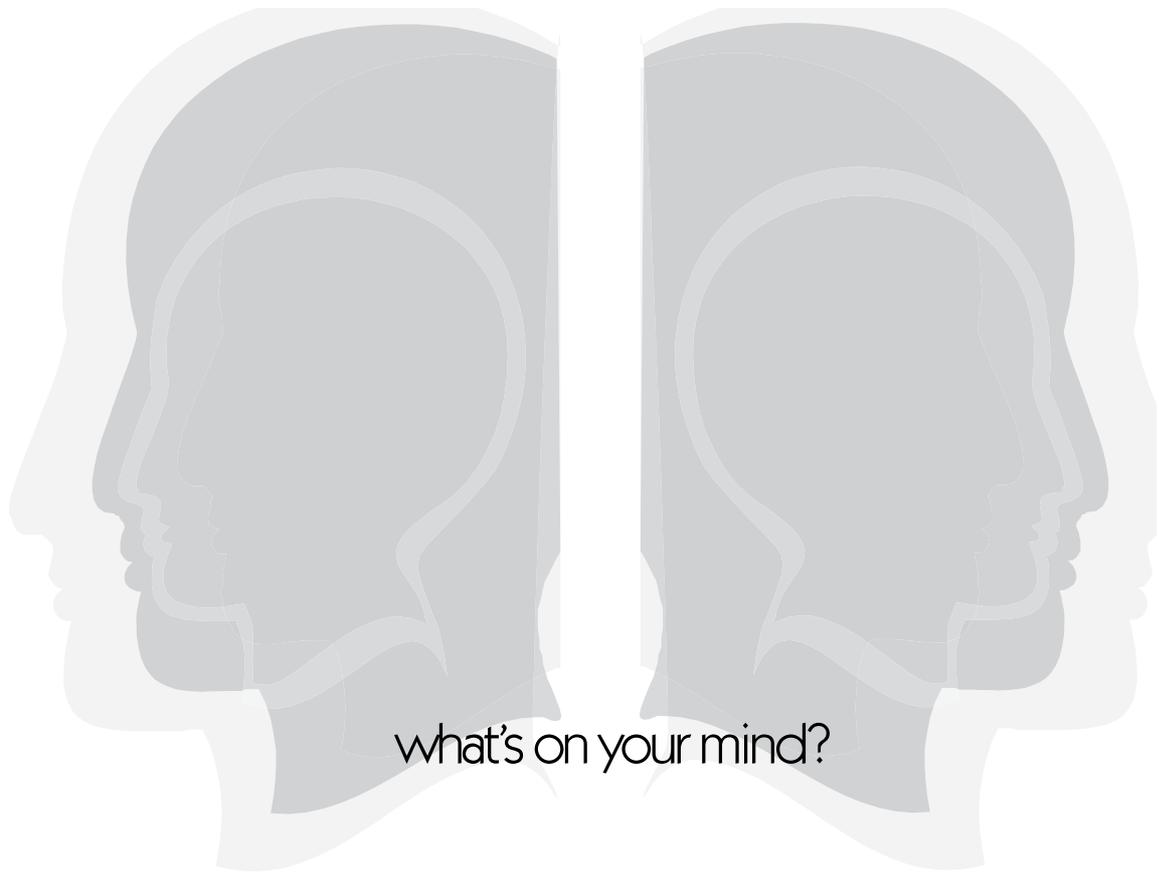
We expect NMAs to keep personal details about the student they are helping to themselves. The student has to have confidence that details about him or her are private. This is especially important with disabilities that are not obvious, such as deafness.

Application forms and more information can be downloaded and printed off from our web pages at

<http://www.cam.ac.uk/cambuniv/disability/about/nonmed.html>

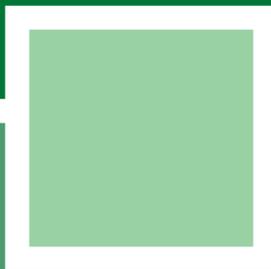
Applicants are asked to complete this form in their own handwriting and forward it to us here at the DRC.

The NMA Scheme
University of Cambridge, Disability Resource Centre
Keynes House, Trumpington Street,
Cambridge, CB2 1QA



what's on your mind?

The University Counselling Service



The Cambridge University Counselling Service on Trumpington Street provides help and support to Cambridge students on a wide range of issues. Not only does it provide individual counselling sessions, the Service also offers group and workshop programmes where students interact. Self-help leaflets and many other reference materials (books and videos) relevant to psychological well-being are also available to visitors.

Jane Ding and Ming Lim talk to Mark Phippen, Head of the University Counselling Service, to discuss the service and facilities provided for postgraduate students.

Can you tell us about the Counselling service? When and why was it set up?

The Counselling Service is a central university service for all Cambridge University students and

helps students from all colleges, in all subjects and with all sorts of different backgrounds. It was founded in 1969 and started off as the Cambridge University Medical Counselling Service, which was set up by GPs who were interested in the psychological well-being of the students. Nowadays, the service is staffed by professionals trained in counselling, psychotherapy and cognitive therapy.

What types of Counselling Services are offered to students?

The Counselling Service offers care and support on a large variety of issues, including academically-related problems such as work and exam stress, work-block problems and relationship problems with supervisors. Counselling also helps students with personal problems,

for example, eating disorders, self-harm, sexual problems, identity problems, cultural issues, homesickness and bereavement. The counsellors in the Service have worked with all different sorts of the problems. Many students feel alone when struggling with their problems, but talking to a counselor or meeting in a counselling group helps people to know that they are not alone.

Can you give us some facts and figures? For example, what proportion of the student community uses the services? What's the proportion of postgraduates to undergraduates? What about the male to female ratio? What about staff-counselling?

The Counselling Service is actually two different services: one provided

for the students and the other for university staff.

Last year, over 1000 students (6% of the student population) used the Counselling Service, with half of them being postgraduate students. This is mainly due to the two reasons. First, grads work all year around while undergrads are here only during the academic terms. Second, the support systems for postgrads are rather patchier than those for undergrads.

About two-thirds of students seeking counselling are female. Perhaps this is because women tend to be more prepared to deal with their problems through talking during the earlier stages of their problems, while men sometimes hesitate to talk about their issues until the later stages.

The Staff Counselling Service started in 2000 and the service is growing rapidly. There are currently 3 counsellors working with 200 staff members per year.

How are problems dealt with, with regards to the confidentiality of students?

The Counselling Service is a member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and acts within the 'Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy', which includes a strict code governing confidentiality. All conversations and paperwork are confidential. There are two exceptions to this code. The first is when the student is happy to share their counselling information with others, as in the case when their academic work is affected and they want their tutor and/or supervisor to be informed. In this case an explicit agreement between the counsellor and the student regarding who to speak to and what to tell them would be made. The second circumstance is when the counsellor believes that the student is in imminent danger of hurting him/herself or others. Even in this rare situation, the counsellor would try to discuss this with the student before speaking to someone else.

Do students seek help from the Counselling Service at a first instance or as a last resort?

Some students come to the Service at first instance while others don't. Approximately two-thirds of those

who come to the Service have spoken to someone else about their problems prior to counselling and were informally referred or advised to seek help from the Service. These include talking to a GP, college nurse, tutor or chaplain, and more frequently friends and families.

Undergraduates and postgraduates have different academic needs and life experiences. Are there any problems that are commonly encountered by postgrads? Are there large differences in the types of problems that postgrads and undergrads face?

Undergrads are traditionally younger and the types of problems they face include adjusting to a new environment, homesickness, relationship problems, identity problems, and dealing with issues related to fitting in. On the other hand, postgrads are generally older, more mature and with more life experience. Their academic work is usually less structured and involves much more self-discipline. The problems postgrads face include problems with organizational skills (time- and space-wise), maintaining a well-balanced work and social life and cultural issues. Students having problems with their supervisors usually fall into one of the two problem categories: the first one involves a lack of connection and communication with the supervisor, and the second one is when the bond is too tight, as in the supervisor is working too closely with the student and student feels that his/her work is constantly under scrutiny. Both situations can result in friction affecting the student's ability to perform.

Most undergraduate students are away out of term time, while most postgraduate students stay in Cambridge to work. Is the counselling service available for students all year round or only during term time?

The Counselling Service is open all year round except for short breaks over Christmas and Easter.

Which of the group and workshop programmes aim to help specifically postgraduate students?

Many of the groups and workshops are open to both undergrads and postgrads. There are two long-term Postgraduate Groups that focus specially on discussing issues

which focus on postgrads. Students in these groups meet regularly to share their experiences and insights with others.

Are there specific times during which larger numbers of students require counselling?

The busiest time of the year for the Counselling Service is October, when most students are beginning their academic year. More appointments are also made during the winter months, including the Christmas period. Summer is the time period when more postgrads than undergrads make use of the Service, as many of them are under the pressure of completing their theses. As for during term time, more students seek counselling during the first and last weeks of the terms.

How do you aim to increase awareness of the service among the postgraduate community?

The Counselling Service has close links with the Graduate Union, which is represented on the Counselling Service Committee. The Service also works closely with the CUSU Welfare Officers. In addition, I liaise with college tutors and sit on the Graduate Tutors Committee. The Service is also taking part in helping to set up an International Students Office, which will focus on helping students from overseas, many of whom are postgraduate students. Finally, the Counselling Service has a good web-site which gives very good descriptions of the services provided.

Are there any plans for expansion of the counselling programme?

Yes. The Counselling Service has just launched a new peer support scheme at the college level. This is a pilot project where students are trained to help others within their college. We are starting with postgraduate students in a handful of Colleges, and a number have been selected for the programme and training will take place this Easter Term. The programme will be launched in October 2005. If it is successful, it will be expanded to other Colleges and to work with undergraduates.

Bring out your Bling!

Mei Lee (aka MCLee) is a PhD student in Biotechnology

Mention Hip Hop and people will often think American black rappers in hoodies and stashes of bling bling (that's gold chains and diamond rings for those lacking the lingo).

Hip Hop culture encompasses far more than that. It represents aspects of break dancing, graffiti art, beat boxing, MC and Dj-ing.

Who can forget the breakin' featured in the 1998 Run DMC vs. Jason Nevins video for 'It's Like That'? Originating from the Bronx in New York in the 1970's, Bboys (and girls!) battle against one another, pushing their body to the limit, with crowd pleasing spins and freezes requiring years of practice (and bruises) to reach perfection.

Graffiti artists, aka writers, would rather see their art form not termed as vandalism, but more of a form of expression, even though you're more than likely to spot these on the side of a speeding train.

Beat boxing, or Urban Vocal Percussion imitates the sound of a drum and beat patterns using the lips, tongue, mouth, throat, voice and cheeks. Just picture a dude with his hands cupped over his mouth spitting, with his nod heading furiously in the corner of the Fez.

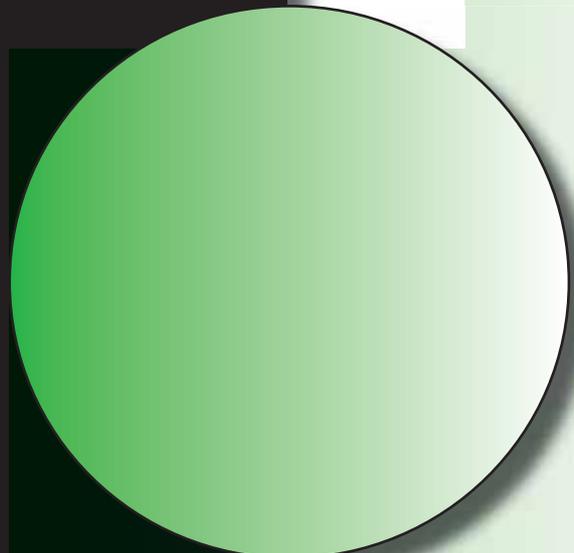
MCs are arguably the best and most outspoken component of modern hip hop. The MC, standing for 'master of ceremonies', hosts the party, controls the microphone and possesses a flair for verbal rhyme (no reason required). Like breaking, MC battles take place all over the world, from dodgy looking alleyways in Philadelphia to church halls in quaint essential Cambridge. Verbal sparring battles between two rappers, were recently

showcased in the autobiographical film '8 mile' starring notorious rap star Eminem.

Kids of our generation have grown up to the sounds of hip hop, from 80's artists Vanilla Ice, Bobby Brown and MC Hammer to more current chart stars such as P Diddy and 50 Cent. More recently to have exploded on the scene are the dancehall reggae sounds from the likes of Sean Paul. The dances moves associated have also evolved from fast, tightly choreographed routines, to more freestyle sexy grinding moves (adults only please).

Here in Cambridge, there is a small but growing hip hop scene. One particularly active group, Sin Cru aim to promote hip hop culture, introducing dance classes in schools, and teaching members of the CUCDW (Cambridge University Contemporary Dance Workshop). If you want to star in Nelly's next music video, you better start coming to these classes!

Finally, what you wear is probably more important than getting those 360 degree headspins tight. Keep it loose, your trainers have got to be dazzling white and the colossal weight of your jewels has got to match the attitude! Shake it....







Ghana:

Beyond the Ashanti Kingdom

Tarek Mouganie, PhD
student at St Catharine's
recounts a journey back to
his birth land

'On 21st of December 2004,
I made my 25th return to
Ghana in the ten years I have
been studying and living in
the United Kingdom – this
time, however, the journey
was to be a little different.'

(photographs by Tarek Mouganie)

To put things into perspective, it's best to side track a little and explain that I was brought up in the Ashanti region of Ghana, the richest part of the country both economically and culturally. Its wealth stems from being part of the slave trade in the 1600's but is now based on the export of gold, and cash crops such as cocoa – 90% of chocolate is made from beans provided by Ghanaian growers. Now the Ashanti region celebrates its diversity and history by flaunting its eccentric traditions, accumulated by the many *Asantehenes* (gold clad kings) that have ruled the empire over the years, as well as its crafts (like the fantastic *Kente* cloth that is famous worldwide).

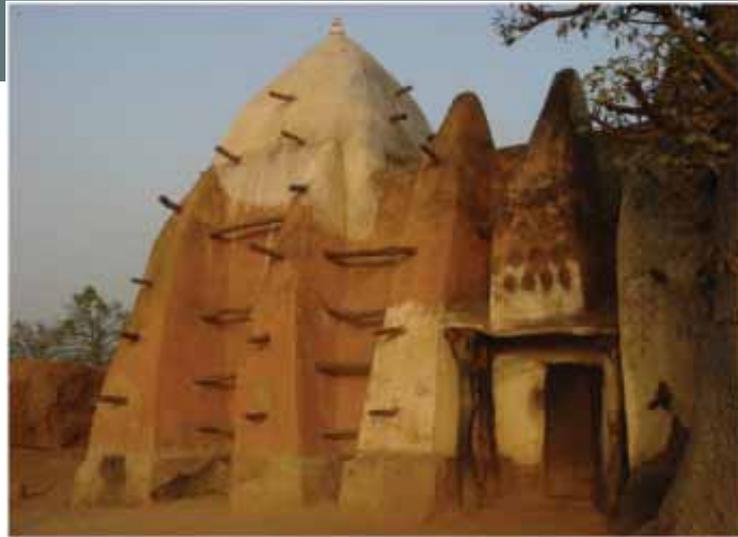
From the time I had spent in Ghana, the Ashanti region, its nightlife and culture, were all I knew. All the other attractions the country had to offer turned into the background with constant wishes of 'must do that sometime before I leave'. Well, here was my chance – on this visit I had a friend joining me, and I could take a look at the country with new eyes.

Upon arrival in Accra and descent from the plane, the difference in temperature between good ol' Blighty and Ghana was instantly

recognisable. The stifling heat and humidity made your clothes cling to your skin instantaneously. The look of sheer horror on my friend was a picture on its own. After all, it was evening time – how much worse could it get during the day?

Not much worse. Accra is situated in the south of Ghana by the coast; its open landscape and the seawater do not make for the perfect climate (tourist-wise), which is all for the better, as its main attractions are commerce and nightclubs. For this trip, we were going to concentrate on the more rural areas of the country, from the palm tree lined beaches of Cape Coast, with lush forests and cool moist air, to the safaris and mud mosques of the north, with dry landscapes fun for driving through.

The first stop in our journey was Kumasi, my hometown and our travel hub. It was here that Caroline, my guest, had her first experience of what a true West African market is like. Central market is located within the centre of the Kumasi and spans as far as the eye can see. It's at this point in the city that most local trade and shopping take place – just about anything can be bought, from food and fashion to spare parts and electronics. After stocking up on all the essential gifts for when we return, Caroline and I made our way out of Kumasi and the Ashanti region to explore the



Larabanga – The Mud Mosque dating back to the 1600's (the oldest in Ghana).

rest of the country. Having packed our swimwear and taken enough sun block to last us well through the next millennium, we figured that the town of Elmina would be the ideal place for a bit of R&R and some culture.

Elmina is situated on a thin strip of land that separates the Benya Lagoon from the Atlantic; it started off as a fishing village over seven hundred years ago but soon became the Portuguese, and later Dutch, headquarters. Its most famous landmark is the Castle of St. George; built by the Portuguese in 1482, it was used during the slave trade and now hosts an incredibly moving museum within its church

Another attraction local to Elmina is the famous Kakum National Park. Less than an hour away from the beaches of Cape Coast, Kakum offers hikes and walks around the lush three-canopy rainforest. Its flora and fauna can easily be experienced from the 350m-long and 40m-high wood-and-rope walkway that is suspended between seven trees and broken up by a number of viewing platforms (strictly not for those with a poor head for heights!). After a few days sightseeing and falling asleep under coconut trees, our time in the South of Ghana was now over – it was time to head back to Kumasi and get ourselves ready for the long journey up north.



Mole National Park – African elephants showing their true colour as they leave the watering hole after a cool bath

Northern Ghana differs immensely from the south; its atmosphere is dry and the landscape is somewhat barren, but this does not reflect on the warmth of the people. Our main destination up north was Mole National Park – its safari is somewhat different to the luxurious ones on offer in the East and South

ore special. However the journey up created some of the main highlights of our entire trip.

The rather bumpy road to the North, towards the city of Wa, was one of the earlier trading routes down to the coast and was established by Muslims in Mali. As a result, several

Kumasi's Central Market - Africa's largest market

cropped up all over the place. Although many would disagree, the less touristy mosques unfrequented by travellers on the way up to Mole allow strangers to experience the true friendliness of the Ghanaian people. The road, which takes up to 12 hours to travel along, is somewhat off-putting when the brand new highway on the other side of Ghana only takes four hours to make the journey up to see the animals. Don't let that stop you, though. The various markets, the wonderful people that flaunt the beauty of their lives and their heritage as well as the historic landmarks, make it all worthwhile.

Upon arrival in Mole, the dry and dusty air during the harmattan season was ideal for a safari. Waking up at four in the morning and taking a trek (yes, walking, that's right) around the park during the sunrise to view the animals bathing and cooling down before the strong heat was probably the most exhilarating experience. Seldom do you get a chance to see the animals at such close proximity.

After ten days in Ghana, our trip was coming to an end. Our drive down to Accra was kept alive by the experiences we had acquired during our visits up north (especially the rather entertaining incident Caroline had with a baboon stealing her Pringles in Mole). Spending over thirteen years of my life growing up in Kumasi had made me a bit apprehensive about being a tourist in Ghana - it's good to be proven wrong once in a while.



Kakum National Park - The rainforest canopy walkway



Getting the correct tunes with the Graduate Orchestra



It's a Sunday afternoon at graduate college Hughes Hall. The Cambridge Graduate Orchestra is rehearsing Schnittke's *(Not) A Midsummer Night's Dream* and something sounds terribly wrong.

Conductor Peter Tregear stops the orchestra for a talking-to which ends with the words: "One of the things this will do is make the Rachmaninov sound good."

The Schnittke is the opening piece in a programme which will feature Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* for piano and orchestra followed by Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherezade*. The Schnittke is also a musical joke. It is intended to sound as if something is awry.

"It has to be played with conviction," says principal horn player Deborah Hayden. "You have to be in on the joke"

Fast forward several weeks to the evening of 7 March and the orchestra is making its debut at the West Road concert hall. The Schnittke is received with a mixture of pleasure and puzzlement by the 230 concert-goers in the audience.

"It certainly got people talking," says pianist Alex Reid afterwards. "It's not normal Cambridge repertoire. It's flashy and experimental."

Beginning with a satirical piece was a daring choice for an orchestra that only came into being in the autumn following conversations between Reid

and graduate musicians at the university. Reid had realised there was a demand for a place where they could meet and play with people of their own age who had similar schedules.

"Graduate life is not like the boom and bust of the

undergraduate terms where you are on the go for eight weeks and then once everyone goes home there's nothing," says Reid.

His idea for an orchestra for graduates appealed to conductor Tregear who was once, in his own words, a particularly "bolshie" graduate student at King's College. At that time he felt that graduate community life compared poorly with the undergraduate experience. Since becoming a lecturer and director of music at Fitzwilliam and Churchill colleges he has not changed his view.

In contrast to undergraduate orchestras which have to fit everything in during term time, this orchestra rehearsed for its first concert once every fortnight from late October until March. It held its rehearsals on Sundays, attracting members who were busy on weekdays working in laboratories, hospitals, schools, and even at the university's Board of Graduate Studies.

This longer-term approach appealed to a range of musicians including past members of the Cambridge University Chamber Orchestra, the Cambridge University Symphony Orchestra and the Cambridge University Music Society's first and second orchestras. Some members of the orchestra have even got together outside of rehearsals to form their own chamber groups, with principal violinist Sarah Benedict starting a string quartet and other members making up a woodwind ensemble to play Poulenc's *Sextet for Piano and Wind*.

The programme that the orchestra came together to play had a Russian theme. Coming next after Schnittke, Rachmaninov's rhapsody is neo-classical in style and was inspired by the 24th Caprice of the violin virtuoso and composer Paganini. This may be better known to the less musical among us as the theme tune for Melvyn Bragg's *South Bank Show* (composed by Andrew Lloyd Webber). In writing this piece, Rachmaninov was inspired by the myth that Paganini owed his technical proficiency to a deal struck with an evil spirit. The keyboard part in the final variation of this piece is so devilishly difficult that Rachmaninov was said to down a glass of *crème de menthe* before playing it himself.

"The difficult 15th variation was executed flawlessly and was extremely stylish too," says Reid's piano coach David Earl.

Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherezade*, played next, is based on the story from the *Arabian Nights* of a sultan who was in the habit of executing his wives after just one night to stop them from nagging him. One day he wed Scheherezade who enchanted him on her wedding night with a story that didn't finish. Longing to know what happened after each cliff-hanger, he spared her night after night and never did execute her.

"The best thing about *Scheherezade* is that it's got parts for everyone to shine in. There are a lot of solos for the principal woodwind and brass and it kept everyone interested in the rehearsals," says Reid.

The orchestra is already planning two more concerts. The first will be held on July 10 at Trinity Chapel. It will have a Spanish theme and will feature the *Gypsy Airs* of Pablo de Sarasate. The second will take place on the 23 September for Cambridge's Alumni Weekend.

"We've had the first concert and it was successful. It proves the concept of a Graduate orchestra works," says Reid. "We are looking forward to plenty more concerts."

For information about future concerts or joining the orchestra visit
www.cambridgegraduateorchestra.com

SPONSORED FEATURE: McKinsey & Company

From academia into the world of business – what's it really like out there?

Stuart Farmer on why PhD students can make great management consultants.

Why did you make the transition from academia to consultancy?

Having studied Civil and Mechanical Engineering at Oxford University and more recently completed a PhD in Structural Mechanics at Cambridge University, I began to realize that life as a Structural Engineer was not for me. I felt that a career that relies on problem solving would enable me to not only use my research ability, but also provide the variety I was looking for in my first professional role.

What have you been working on recently?

I have just finished working with a hospital on the launch of some operational improvement tools for the wards, which are intended to reduce patient length of stay and improve nursing productivity. It involved having to work very closely with a client team to sell the new ways of working to the nurses on the wards, and was particularly enjoyable as we could see in real time the positive difference the changes were making.

Do PhD students have skills that will help them succeed as consultants?

Given that I had to teach and coach other students I felt comfortable talking to and building long lasting relationships. As a result, the coaching and mentorship model in McKinsey really resonates with me. Also, being able to talk to a client and find out exactly what is going on in an organisation is paramount to the success of a project.

PhDs are mature, bright, driven people with leadership and methodical problem solving abilities. These are the building blocks of a great management consultant.

Was it an easy transition to make?

It was challenging. However, the training and support I received before I started was invaluable. I had a three week residential training course providing a basic professional competence in finance, strategy, marketing and micro-economics. I have also had to get comfortable with ambiguity and change. Often you don't have all the relevant information to hand and work can change direction daily. I have also been surprised by the rigour in the analysis we do – consultants are every bit as thorough as researchers when it comes to driving to the right answer.

What have you gained since you've joined?

I've now been at McKinsey just over six months. I have travelled to New York, Paris and Dublin; have worked in the travel, education, defence and health sectors; and have been offered more opportunities and training than I have ever thought possible.

Find out more at www.mckinsey.com

WRITE FOR GOWN

Next issue out on 10 August 2005

READ GOWN ONLINE

www.gownmagazine.com.

To get involved and for any comments,

e-mail: [**editor@gownmagazine.com**](mailto:editor@gownmagazine.com)

question the answer

For career opportunities, please visit
www.mckinsey.com

McKinsey&Company